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Edinburgh Art Festival Exhibition 'Eskimo'

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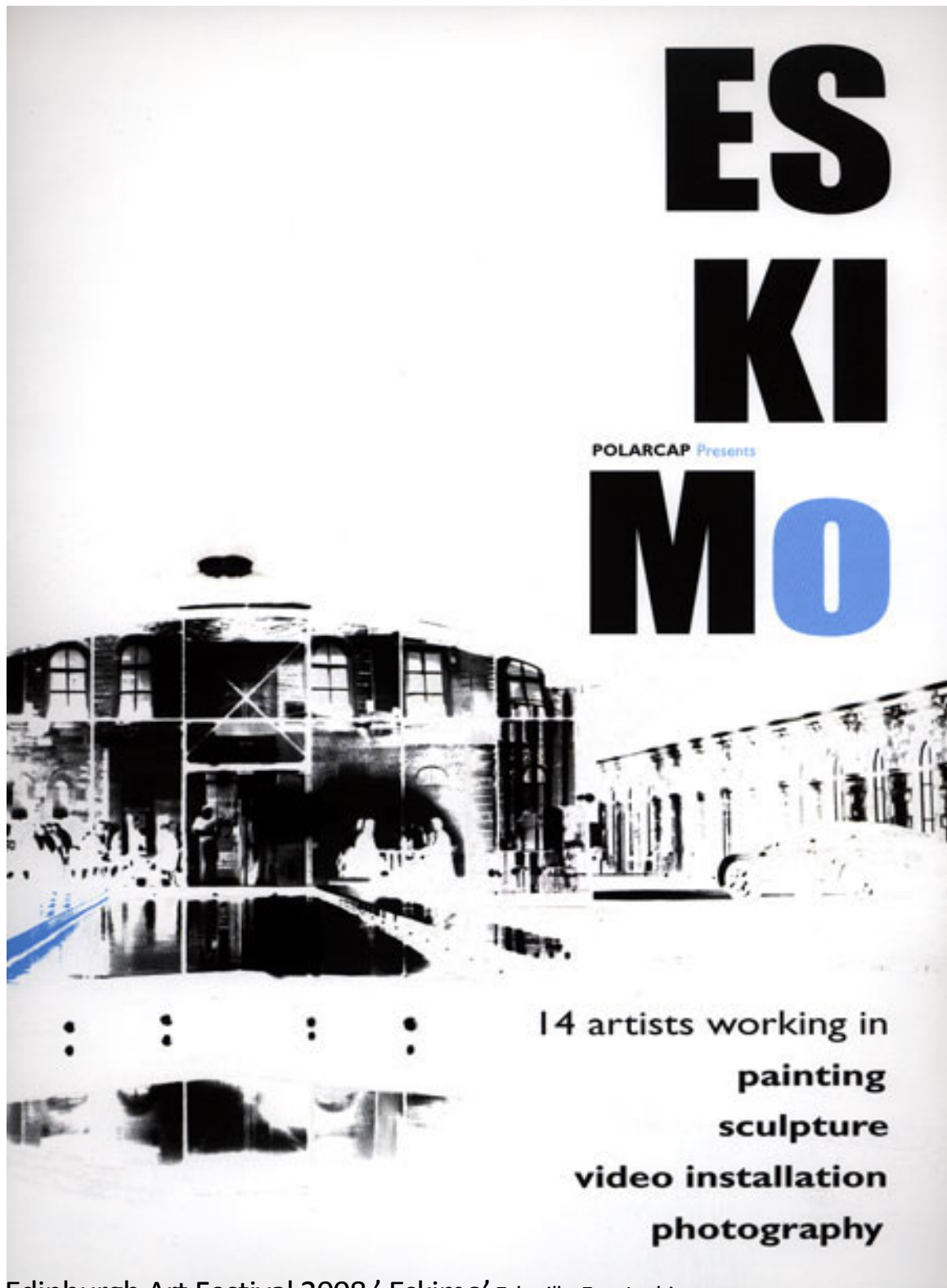
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Edinburgh Art Festival 2008,' Eskimo' Eskmills, East Lothian

Portfolio Submission Ref 2014

Eskimo is an exhibition and publication with commissioned essays and accompanying visual arts conference originated by artist Liz Adamson and Graeme Todd (Polarcap Contemporary Art Projects) as a principal venue of the Edinburgh Art Festival 2008.

In the spring of 2008 we were approached by Malcolm Gillies of Isertal and Hot Tin Roof PR agency on the back of the success of our previous exhibition at Edinburgh Arts Festival, 'No More Stars' to work with Isertal construction, based at Eskmills in Musselburgh just outside Edinburgh to produce another exhibition that would again be included in the festival in the coming summer.

On our initial site visit we were shown a newly fitted exhibition space within the company's flagship building that was in the form of a foyer entrance to the building designed to signify a prestigious arrival point for business. On further inspection we were shown an enormous attic space in the adjacent building that we immediately recognised as being a significant space with great potential as a major arts venue. Inspired by this we decided to accept the offer to work with Isertal on condition that we were to use the hitherto unused loft and on the production of a full exhibition catalogue with commissioned essays. We saw the venue as a platform that we could use to further our aim of introducing new and interesting combinations of artists to a wider, out of city audience and avoiding the 'usual suspects' cliches that are common in any arts festival.

Having secured complete control over the content of the show we considered our approach; playing with the words 'Eskmills' and 'Eskimo' which translates as "snowshoe netters" or 'people who speak a different language', the exhibition would draw on the history and location of the former Victorian rope factory and its role in the manufacture of deep sea fishing nets and the concept of apartness, diversity and otherness that 'Eskimo' suggests. This was compatible with our concept of allowing the selected artists the maximum freedom possible in their response to the invitation to participate. We brought together a group of artists that crossed boundaries in terms of age, international presence, nationality, gender and relative career position to make a uniquely provocative collection; our skills would be in ensuring that these different 'Eskimo' voices would hold coherence in this new and impressive venue.

The artists were given as much latitude as possible in terms of the work they would make in response to the call to exhibit but it was key that all participants were briefed in full by Graeme and myself and that in depth discussions were had regarding the reasons for their selection in context with the rationale of the show. Our experience as artists would now be translated into our role as curators and this led us to take the stance that the artists should be given as much respect as possible and that the mutual position of trust between curators and artists would provide the creative dialogue a risk element was foreseen and accepted by all participants and this provided the catalyst that would give the show its singularity of presence and justify its eventual stance of significant apartness within the body of the arts festival.



Fig. 1 Eskimo venue : Full length of Eskmills east side and 2 purpose built new gallery spaces in north facing building .



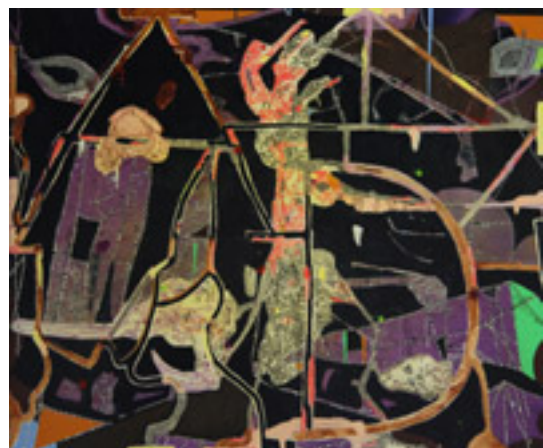
Fig 2 Gallery 1 of 4 before fitting out.



The 14 artists, ranging from the emerging to the internationally recognised, are:

- Graham Fagen (Scotland)
- San Keller (Switzerland)
- Iain Patterson (Scotland)
- Keuhne+Klein (Switzerland)
- Graeme Todd (Scotland)
- Dean Hughes (England)
- Ian Hamilton Finlay (Scotland)
- Alexander Guy (Scotland)
- Gareth Fisher (Scotland)
- Kevin Henderson (Scotland)
- Norman Shaw (Scotland)
- Michael Windle (Scotland)
- Liz Adamson (Scotland)
- Trine Pederson (Denmark).

Eskimo presented a variety of **different media** including painting, drawing, digital projection, sculpture, photography, and performance.

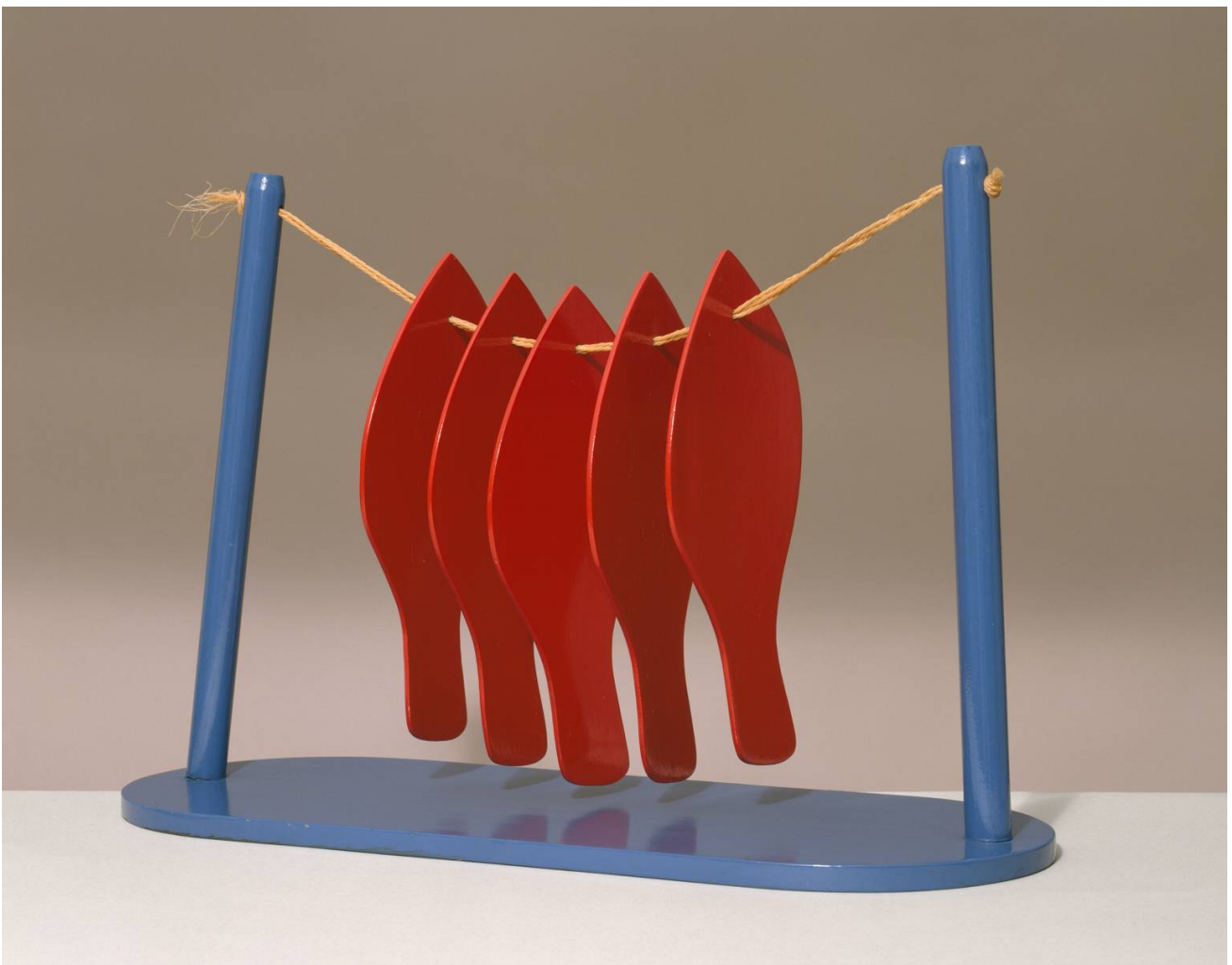


Eskimo

In Canada and Greenland, the term 'Eskimo' is now perceived to be derogatory, mainly down to the false perception that it means "eaters of raw meat". In these areas, it has been commonly replaced by 'Inuit'. However, the former term continues to be used in Alaska and Siberia. Etymologists have identified two different origins of the word 'Eskimo'. The most well-known translates it as "snowshoe netters"; the other being "people who speak a different language".

The artists in this exhibition indeed show themselves to be "people who speak a different language". An interesting example of this is the personal archive of Alan Rankin, antiquarian bookseller, whose longstanding relationship with Ian Hamilton Finlay both as supplier of books [Hamilton Finlay's severe agoraphobia prevented him, for long periods, from leaving Little Sparta] and as personal friend and confidant is revealed in an intimate display of letters to him over a period spanning decades. The intimate nature of this working arrangement is made available for the viewer to see as the artist shares his thoughts with his bookseller comrade in arms.

Also displayed is a wooden toy sculpture made by Hamilton Finlay in the 60's, which was presented as a gift to Rankin. Because of its intimate nature as a gift it has never been shown before in Britain.



Press Coverage Reviews and Articles

The Times: 26 June: 'Edinburgh Art Festival' Mike Wade

The List: 3rd July: 'Where the Art is' Anna Miller

Architecture Scotland: 14th July 'Polarcap opens the Gallery at Eskmills'

Evening News: 15 July 'Chill out at new exhibit'

The List: 16 July 'Best of the rest: Eskimo' Andrew Grassie (incl.image)

Evening News: 22nd July 'New art gallery opening at Victorian Mill'

The Scotsman: 25th July 'Critic's Choice: Eskimo' Duncan Macmillan

Scotland on Sunday: 27th July 'For Arts Sake'

New Statesman: 28th July 'Art' Sue Hubbard

The List: 31st July 'HitList' Festival Art: Eskimo

The List: 31st July Rosie Lesso reports on Edinburgh Art Festival (incl. image, third of page)

The List: 31st July 'Top 20 This weeks unmissable Shows' (incl.image) this list included theatre, music, etc.: Edinburgh International Festival wide

The Scotsman Review: 1st August (image on cover) and also article page 1 'Pooling Resources' Duncan Macmillan (inc image)

Scotland on Sunday: 3rd August 'The time and the place' Best shows of Edinburgh International Festival

The Glasgow Herald: 29th August, Jack Mottram, Review

The Sunday Herald: 17th August, Catriona Black, Review

The List 14th August: 'New exhibition space warmed up by fine group show'

Review David Pollock (incl. image)

Artmag magazine: July and August magazine with images

Also listings in Skinny, Guardian, Edinburgh guide and articles with images in East Lothian press, Edinburgh Festival Guides

Page on Scottish Arts Council Site with images.

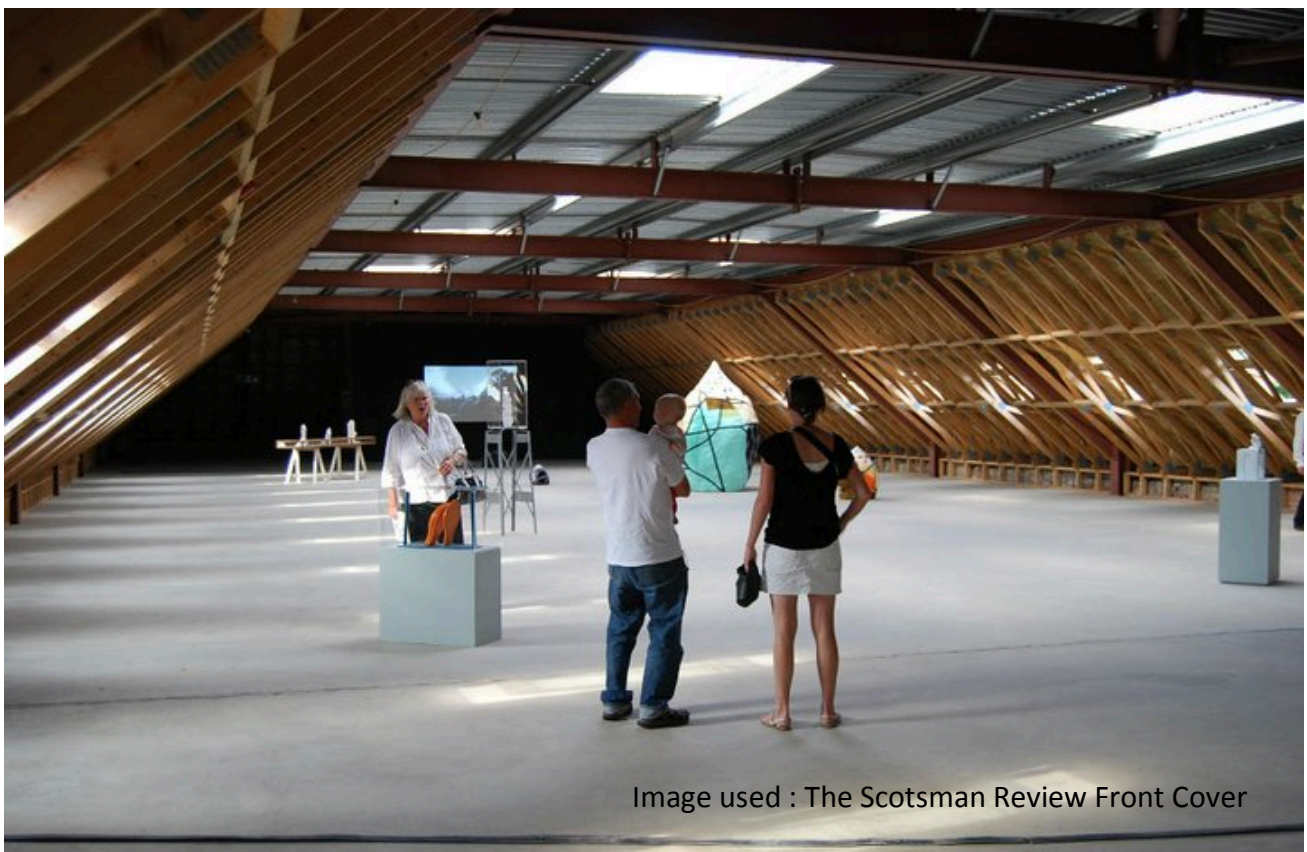


Image used : The Scotsman Review Front Cover



The benefit can be weighed in the critical profile we have achieved including high media coverage, peer evaluation and visitor feedback. This benefits our organization and must have a positive impact on the career development of the artists involved. The project increased Polarcap's curatorial experience and provides our organization with a working relationship with artists we will continue to develop. Participating artists met during installation and during the event providing a further platform for discussion and creative exchange. During the exhibition July-Oct, 1,170 people visited, including the conference and educational attendees. The exhibition was used as an educational visit for students particularly from Edinburgh College of Art and Duncan of Jordanstone in Dundee.

Eskimo has an accompanying publication, 22 page, colour catalogue with two commissioned essays by curator, art critic and historian, Ola Woitkiewicz and artist Kevin Henderson. The catalogue is fully illustrated and also includes accompanying texts from the artists. Polarcap gave 2 curators talks and were subsequently asked to participate in **ASK [Arts Strategies and Knowledge]** conference at the Brunton Theatre in Musselburgh [conference on ways for artists to progress their working practices] in October 2008. The conference used Eskimo as a focus visit including a further curators talk and was attended by approx 200 delegates.



[Art:Strategies+Knowledge]

VISUAL ARTS CONFERENCE

Brunton Theatre, Musselburgh
Saturday 11 October 2008

Presented by East Lothian Council in association with East Lothian Artists Forum



[Art:Strategies+Knowledge]

This conference has been designed to engage with artists to explore options for creative and professional development, career pathways, and funding and support mechanisms. It will also focus on recent developments within the visual arts in East Lothian.

East Lothian Council's devolved funding scheme in partnership with the Scottish Arts Council that will offer awards and bursaries to artists to support their creative and professional development will be launched at the conference.

To book please complete the booking form and send with payment of £20 to Arts Service, East Lothian Council, Brunton Hall, Ladywell Way, Musselburgh EH21 6AF. For more information please call 0131 665 9900.



ASK [Arts Strategies and Knowledge]

Liz Adamson and Graeme Todd originated the name and area of research for this conference and acted in an advisory role to Lesley Smith, Arts Officer, East Lothian Council.

Participants : Mungo Campbell, Deputy Director at the Hunterian Museum & Art Gallery; Tom Littlewood, Director of Ginkgo Projects Ltd; Wendy Law, Freelance Visual Arts Consultant & Specialist Advisor (Visual Arts) Cultural Enterprise Office; Sam Ainsley, artist, and recently Head of MFA, Glasgow School of Art, Liz Adamson and Graeme Todd, artists and independent curators; Andrew Crummy, Convenor of Three Harbours Festival; Su Grierson, Perthshire Artists Forum; Sarah Scott-Ginkgo Projects

Set up in 2007, Polarcap (Liz Adamson and Graeme Todd) contemporary art projects, provides a new research platform for artists' discussion and creative exchange and aims to bring high quality contemporary art to as wide an audience as possible with particular concerns for venues out with the city environs. It originates exhibitions, publications and project manages commissions and educational activities. www.polarcap.org.uk